

The Fossilization of Quechua: Peruvian Quechua Revitalization Activists as Impeding Quechua Revitalization

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Introduction

Quechua, an Amerindian language family spoken in the Andes in South America, is rarely written or used in formal situations, in which Spanish is used instead. Because of this, Quechua is regarded as an “oral” language or as “backward”; though the language family currently claims a relatively large number of speakers, with as many as ten million worldwide, Quechua is facing eventual extinction because Quechua-speaking parents, because of their shame for their “backward” native language, prefer for their children to speak only Spanish. This paper looks in particular at Peru, which contains the highest concentration of Quechua speakers, with as much as half of the world’s Quechua-speaking population. In Peru, since the 1970s, there have been several attempts by both the government and various NGOs, led by professional linguists, anthropologists, and sociologists, to revitalize the language through officialization, use in media, and use in education. Despite these attempts, the language is still considered “backward”, and the population of Quechua-speakers is still declining with each generation. With so much effort expended on language revitalization in Peru, why is the language still declining?

I will argue that the key reason why Quechua revitalization attempts have failed thus far is because the activists behind such attempts are not endorsing Quechua as a system of daily communication; the interests of the revitalization activists are separate

from those of the Quechua-speaking peasant class. This paper will explore two facets of the separation between the revitalization activists and the majority of Quechua-speakers: I will look at both linguistic themes—in particular, the linguistic differences between the revitalization activists and the majority of Quechua-speaking peasants that make the would-be “standard” language difficult for the majority of speakers to learn—and anthropological themes, which shall be how the Quechuan languages are viewed by the revitalization activists and peasants. In many cases, these two themes are interconnected. I will show that Quechua-speaking peasants, who represent the vast majority of Quechua speakers, are more concerned with social and economic advancement, which requires knowledge of Spanish, than with the preservation of Quechua; they want only a language to be used in cotidian communication. Quechua revitalization activists, on the other hand, are more interested in the function of Quechua as a marker of identity, and their efforts, therefore, set as priorities “cultural” uses of the language, which in many cases further designate Quechua as “backwards” or unwieldy in a modern environment.

I will pay special attention to the debate surrounding standardization, since this is the axis of current revitalization attempts. In particular, I will analyze the sociolect spoken by the Quechua-speaking middle class; the majority of revitalization activists endorse the middle class Cuzco dialect as the standard dialect of southern Quechua (and, indeed, of all languages in the family), since they consider this sociolect to be the most “Inca”—a term that resonates with this group’s identity. I will show how the revitalization activists’ stance on this debate actually impedes the revitalization of the language. The middle class Cuzco sociolect has been selected for historically unfounded cultural and ideological reasons that appeal only to the revitalization activists themselves.

In opposition, Quechua-speaking peasants feel no cultural tie to this sociolect, and, in fact, the linguistic characteristics of this particular sociolect are so different from southern peasant sociolects as to make it difficult for peasants to emulate. Because of this, instead of being able to use their native language in official settings, peasants would have to learn the middle-class Cuzco sociolect as a separate language. Since Spanish carries greater prestige, peasants are more likely to abandon their native dialect, which, according to revitalization activists, is “impure” and does not serve for social and economic advancement and opt not to learn “standard Quechua” because it would be difficult to learn and serve little purpose. Therefore, despite the work of Quechua revitalization activists, the language would continue to diminish.

Background

This paper deals with the related topics of Quechua revitalization, Quechua officialization, and Quechua standardization; although I will in particular deal with standardization, the other terms shall be used throughout this paper, and it is beneficial to define them here. Put simply, “Quechua revitalization” refers to the many and varied movements that aim to save the Quechuan languages from extinction; that is, “Quechua revitalization” is any attempt to keep the language spoken. “Quechua officialization” refers to the specific revitalization movement in Peru that seeks to put Quechua on an equal level with Spanish in regional or national government, education, and the media. Many organizations hold that this would help dissipate the shame that many peasants have for their native language and encourage them to teach Quechua to their children. “Standardization” refers to the regularization of the language in interdialectal and written

forms and is widely regarded as a necessary step toward officialization. None of these movements are led by a single organization or ideology, but rather reflects the sentiments of a multitude of individuals with diverse goals, some of which I shall expand on later (Cerrón-Palomino 1992a, Ojeda y Ojeda 1992, Wölck 1992).

Quechua revitalization in Peru, starting with the Odría presidency in the 1950s, has been synonymous with officialization; however, the implementation of such government-backed programs as bilingual education—regarded as the first step toward officialization—proved to be difficult because bilingual speakers who spoke good enough Spanish to serve as teachers were unwilling to revert to using Quechua in such a formal setting as the schoolhouse; teachers were proud of their social advancement and their mastery of Spanish and urged their students to speak Spanish at all times so that they too could find success (Pozzi-Escot 1992, Taylor 1992). Another problem, which plagues bilingual education in Peru to this day, was the lack of text books in Quechua; students read and wrote entirely in Spanish (Pantigozo Montes 1992). The regime that attempted to remedy this was the Velasco dictatorship (1968-1975). In the last years of this administration, a government committee consisting of professional linguists published six grammars for the six dominant dialects or languages of Quechua spoken in Peru with corresponding dictionaries. The committee also established an orthographic standard for Quechuan languages that is used with slight modifications to this day. Although this movement had a promising start, that each of the six dialectical regions would pursue bilingual education, broadcast radio programs, and conduct government functions in its own particular, newly standardized dialect in addition to Spanish, regimes following that of Velasco contributed few funds to this movement, and the officialization of Quechua in

each region was in practice rarely implemented (Gugenberger 1992, Jung 1992). Very recently, regional governments in the south have passed laws that require that bilingual education be used in rural locations (Gobierno de Ayacucho 2008); however, corruption and a lack of funds still inhibit these laws from functioning in real world conditions.

Leading Peruvian linguists have argued that the main factor keeping Quechua from operating on par with Spanish as a national official language, besides linguistic prejudice, is the lack of a standard dialect (Cerrón-Palomino 1992b, Itier 1992a). With so many Quechuan languages and dialects spoken in Peru, which dialect shall be used in the national government, education, and media? As things stand, the government recognizes six varieties of Quechua, which correspond to the six most prominent “dialects” in the country. However, while some of these “dialects” are non-mutually intelligible and therefore justifiably deserve individual treatment, the two southern varieties, “Chanca-Ayacuchano” (Soto Ruiz 1976) and “Cuzco-Collao” (Cusihuaman 1976) are mutually intelligible, and the separate treatment for each region is due to cultural reasons instead of linguistic ones. It has been argued that these varieties would benefit from a united “standardized” variety, which would be used in interregional media and in writing, while the regional variants would continue to be used in local settings (Albó 1992). Indeed, it has been argued that this process has already taken place to an extent, for each southern variety in truth represents part of a continuum of varieties that change with each village (Cerrón-Palomino 1992b). If Apurímac, Huancavelica, and Ayacucho all speak “Chanca Quechua”, and Cuzco, Puno, and Arequipa all speak “Cuzco Quechua”, why should all these regions be incapable of uniting to form an even larger standardized language that

could more easily compete with Spanish? As shall be seen, the problem lies in the debate over which variety carries the prestige to serve as the standard variety.

It is first important to note that Quechua, like any language, is an important marker of identity. Indeed, an essential element of the identity of many Peruvian social groups since colonial times has been an association with the “Indigenous” (Mannheim 1992). One facet of this term is represented by the “Inca”—a term that invokes images that do not necessarily correspond to the academically accepted history. Instead, the “Inca” stands for a mythology that has evolved since the Conquest to transform the Inca Empire into a fantastical past that totalizes the myriad of pre-Colombian cultures that once existed in Peru (Upon the arrival of the Spaniards, the Incas had been in power for only a couple hundred years, and the regional, pre-Inca cultural traditions were still vibrant) and paints life before the conquest as a paradise made imperfect by the advent of a sinful West. According to this model, the “indigenous”, which is most often recognized as the “Inca”, is set in contrast against the Spanish language and anything associated with “Western” culture (Godenzzi 1992). According to those who sympathize with this model, the only reason “Indians” do not return to their original way of life is because the Spaniards have erased the old traditions, and we can only glimpse at hints of the ancient, perfect ways in modern Indigenous traditions (Mannheim 1992).

Related to the discourse surrounding the Inca is that that surrounds Quechua; Quechua is regarded as the language of the Incas and carries with it elements of that magical past, and the regions regarded as most Inca, especially Cuzco, are thought of as possessing the purest Quechua (Itier 1998b). In opposition to this model, the academic tradition holds that Quechua was merely the administrative language of the Inca, and that

the Inca themselves actually originally may have spoken Aymara—a practice reminiscent of the Romans utilizing Greek as the Mediterranean trade language instead of the expected Latin (Cerrón-Palomino 1992a). Although history is obscured by the lack of written word in pre-Colombian Peru, linguistic evidence shows that Quechua may have originated on the coast of the central Peruvian Andes. Namely, the greatest linguistic diversity within Quechua is found in this region, especially the mountains outside of Lima, and it can therefore be assumed to have originated there (Compare the number of Iberian Romance languages spoken in the Americas to those spoken in the Iberian Peninsula). From there, it may have spread with the Chavín culture (or even earlier cultural traditions, such as that of Caral) to be used as a lingua franca throughout the Andes. Since the language was already founded upon the rise of the Inca, the Inca simply utilized the lingua franca already in place in order to more easily administrate their empire. Therefore, the region surrounding the capital of the Inca Empire, Cuzco, has no more claim to the Quechua language than any other region.

Furthermore, the Quechua-speaking middle class of Cuzco regards its current socialect as the purest form of “true Inca” Quechua. In fact, the variety of Quechua spoken around Cuzco is notable for having changed substantially compared to more conservative dialects, perhaps due to its proximity to Aymara-speaking populations. For example, the varieties of Quechua spoken around the historical seat of the Inca Empire, such as the Cuzco and Bolivian dialects, are the only to possess phonemic aspirated and ejective consonants—their phonological structure is interestingly almost identical to that of Aymara. Furthermore, the Quechua spoken around Cuzco has undergone allophonic variation so that all oclusives are fricativized at the end of a syllable. For example, syllable

final /k/ is realized as [s]. In addition, syllable final /m/ is realized as [n]. This process has not taken place outside of the region in any other language in the family. Thus, Cuzco Quechua, though regarded as the “purest language of the Incas” is in actuality neither “pure” nor “Inca”. Be that as it may, that the Cuzco dialect of Quechua, like all languages, has evolved through time, the Cuzqueño Quechua-speaking middle class declares that this dialect is the most “Inca” and should be utilized as the national standard in place of all other Quechua dialects, which are regarded as corrupted “dialects”. Perhaps the most notorious institution holding this view is the Academia Mayor de la Lengua Quechua, which is composed entirely of the Cuzqueño upper classes, claims itself to be the one true authority on the Quechua language family, and has violently resisted quechua standardization in addition to orthographic revision (Itier 1992a,b; Cerrón-Palomino 1992b). This organization shall be more fully addressed later.

Methods

I gathered my data during one period of eight weeks. During that time, I stayed mostly in Lima; Peru is politically centralized, and most national organizations, including those that deal with the revitalization of Quechua, are located in the capital, as are leading academic figures. However, I traveled to Ayacucho and Huancavelica for a period of a week each for reasons that will be described below. I gathered my data through formal and informal interviews with Quechua revitalization activists and bilingual peasants. Some of my most valuable data was collected through unpredictable, opportune proximity with friends who happened to be Quechua revitalization activists; a single sentence in an otherwise irrelevant conversation could be enough to influence my

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understanding of how someone believed or felt about the language and the efforts to save it.

My most valuable informant was a woman whom I will call Dina, who was a friend of a friend and who owned a boarding house where I ended up staying during my time in Lima. It so happened that Dina was born in Huancavelica, a *mestiza* daughter of a Polish immigrant and a Huancavelica “Indian” lawyer, from whom she had picked up basic Quechua from a young age. When she was seven, her family moved to Lima, where she has spent most of her life. Because of her background, Dina considered herself “Andean”, though her lifestyle was recognizably “Western”—she attended La Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, widely considered the finest university in the country, made a considerable salary during her working years as a sociologist, and lived in the company of her many Limeño friends. Because she owned and ran the boardinghouse where I stayed, I was in constant contact with her. She was also quite talkative, and it took very little probing to gather how she felt about anything; the government’s attempts at Quechua revitalization (and her place in those attempts) were among our favorite subjects. Besides offering me a wealth of firsthand information, Dina provided me with many further contacts; her connections were very extensive. I acquired much of my understanding of the revitalization activists’ sentiments through casual, pleasant conversations with her many friends who frequently stopped by to pay visits.

One of those contacts who was especially helpful was her friend whom I will call Ramiro—a development advisor and, as I am writing this paper, a nominee for *alcalde*, or “mayor”, in his home town of Huando, Huancavelica. It was Ramiro who took me to his hometown to experience “how the real Quechua-speakers lived”. Although I tried to

explain it to him many times, I doubt if he ever understood that he was my true subject of study. In addition to serving as a friend and guide, Ramiro put me in contact with a number of his peasant friends.

Another productive informant and an especially close friend was a professor and revitalization activist whose Quechuan linguistics class I had attended while I studied abroad in 2009, whom I shall call Raúl. Raúl was a pragmatist who genuinely influenced my own personal position and sentiments on the issues presented in this paper. He was aware that the revitalization programs benefited the revitalization activists more than the Quechua speakers they targeted, but he also provided a unique perspective that justified or at least helped rationalize the revitalization strategies attempted so far. Like Dina and Ramiro, Raúl was also very helpful in procuring further contacts.

I traveled outside of Lima for research twice. I traveled to Ayacucho for a week to meet with contacts provided by Raúl who worked in a program for bilingual education at a local university. During this time, I conversed at length with Quechua-speaking students who had learned Spanish as a second language and asked in particular about their difficulties in speaking Quechua in school and their reasons for adopting Spanish. I also traveled to Huando, a small village in the province of Huancavelica, for a week with Ramiro, who was organizing his campaign for mayor and who offered to take me along “to see how the peasants lived”. I readily agreed and took the opportunity to converse with peasants and ask in particular about their difficulties in advancing economically or socially speaking their native language. In both trips, I attempted to gain an understanding of how peasants felt about Quechua and what they needed to speak the language regularly and to feel comfortable speaking it with their children.

The Fossilization of Quechua

Perhaps the most striking characteristic of the Quechua revitalization activists is that very few of them are fluent native speakers. Most learned Quechua as a second language, and they spoke Quechua with a noticeable Spanish accent. Informants confessed to taking private lessons, using language books (mostly for the Cuzco dialect, regardless of the variety their targeted population or older family members spoke), and learning to sing folk songs in Quechua, though they did not fully understand the meaning of the lyrics. Other informants spoke and understood only fragments of the language. In many cases, I found that two speakers of the same dialect spoke so poorly as to be unable to hold the simplest of conversations. Be that as it may, it is this same group of people that appeals to politicians asking for bilingual education and media access for indigenous languages. Why are these people chosen to represent Quechua over millions of fluent speakers, and why do they feel so compelled to revitalize a language they barely speak?

As for the first question, most Quechua revitalization activists come from the upper classes and are capable of dressing and behaving in such a way as can be taken seriously by the government and by NGOs—it is natural that educated politicians would want to correspond with educated representative Quechua-speakers. Furthermore, only this social class has the resources to obtain high levels of education, and only this social class is capable of volunteering large amounts of time to meetings and movements that endorsed Quechua revitalization. Most such activists were of either “indigenous” or “mixed” ethnicity, and they identified strongly with Andean culture. In some cases, people who had lived nearly their entire lives in the coastal capital of Lima referred to

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themselves as “Andean”. Ironically, to have climbed to the upper classes indicates that at some point their ancestors have abandoned the “Andean” lifestyle and adopted a more coastal, “Western” way of life, which includes speaking Spanish in favor of Quechua.

Be that as it may, though Spanish is used as the language in everyday communication, an important aspect of the “Andean” middle class’ identity is its use of Quechua in songs, memorized phrases, and even in choosing names for their children. This is the answer to the second question posed above; the Quechua revitalization activists endorse the use of Quechua so strongly because it represents an important marker of their “Andean” identity. This identity is based in the “indigenous” described earlier and illustrates the Spanish language as a cultural black hole, void of identity. One young revitalization activist who was spending a large sum of money on private lessons told me the following story (All interviews were conducted in Spanish, and I have done all the translations myself):

My father grew up in Ayacucho with my grandmother, who was a single mother. He was the result of a “hit and run” [an expression referring to a father fleeing upon learning that his lover is pregnant]. My grandmother spoke very bad Spanish, and my father spoke pure Quechua until he was seven years old, when my grandfather reappeared and took him away to Lima, where he spent the rest of his life. My grandfather...was a rich, respected man, and he wouldn’t have a son who spoke like an Indian, and he beat him if he spoke Quechua, and my father forgot all but a few phrases. I’m learning Quechua now because the sentiments of my grandfather, and through them the entire social system in this country, have stolen my father’s language from him, and now I want to make up for that somehow.

According to the sentiments of many revitalization activists, Quechua and the identity it represents can be “retaken” from the conquerors and worn as a marker of opposition to

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the established social system. It is not essential that one speaks the language fluently—

indeed, often times Quechua revitalization activists did not know any fluent native speakers with whom they could practice. The most important goal is to rebel against the hegemony of the Spanish language by studying Quechua or endorsing its use at all.

Since Quechua revitalization activists are interested most in exercising Quechua as a marker of identity, the bulk of their programs aim to preserve specific cultural functions of the language. For instance, the Instituto de Estudios Peruanos, an NGO that published works on a wide range of topics, including Peruvian history, sociology, anthropology, and linguistics has published folk tales and poetry in Quechua, the six Quechua grammars and dictionaries written (in Spanish) during the Velasco regime, and even a course book for Spanish speakers to learn Quechua as a second language (Soto Ruiz 1992); however, the organization has not published a single text book in Quechua that can be used in bilingual education. There are no wide-reaching newspapers in Quechua, but a group of revitalization activists I encountered claim to write an article on the Quechua wikipedia each day. Of course, these measures reflect the interests of the activists themselves and do not benefit the massive Quechua peasant class; few peasants have access to the internet or care to read “Inca” poetry or the Huarochirí manuscript. Another example of the revitalization activists pursuing their own interests is an organization of which Dina, the woman who owned the boarding house at which I stayed, was a member called “Alfabeto Runasimi Inka”, or “ARI”. Dina indicated that the goal of this organization was to make it possible for Quechua-speakers themselves to regulate their own language (interestingly, all of the members were of the middle class). While this was the organization’s declared ultimate goal, Dina indicated that its first step toward

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that goal's realization was to develop a universal alphabet for all Quechua languages

based on the writing of the Incas, which is apparent in their quipus and in their textile designs (Mainstream academics reject such theories that the Incas possessed writing, as no such system has yet been convincingly demonstrated). It seems that ARI is expending its resources on developing a system of writing that better represents an imagined "Inca" past when the Latin based alphabet is already well established and more convenient in a globalized world.

As for the peasant class, I found that it was predominately concerned more with economic and social advancement than with the preservation of its native language; if speaking Spanish was a step toward a better standard of living, and a peasant had the opportunity to learn Spanish, he or she readily did so. As one peasant told me, "I want my children to go to the city to work, and there is no reason to speak Quechua there. No one would understand them, and everyone would mock them." This last point is especially interesting; while most middle aged peasants are bilingual, the younger generations speak only Spanish, for the parents are ashamed of their status as "peasant" and want their children to obtain a better social status; by abandoning Quechua, they are able to avoid the most characteristic peasant trait. If I approached a peasant and spoke to him or her in Quechua, he or she would invariably respond in Spanish. Indeed, they expressed offense for having been addressed in Quechua in the first place. Among the peasant class in Peru, speaking Quechua is a mark of shame, and revitalization attempts will fail if they are unable to overcome this prejudice.

Unfortunately, some revitalization attempts, instead of alleviating this prejudice, actually exacerbate it. An example is the bulk of literature thus far published in Quechua

by language revitalization organizations—such literature almost entirely consists of folktales and folksongs. Revitalization activists justified this by stating, “These stories represent the thoughts and interests of the peasants.” The activists believed that the peasants, since they were less tainted by Western culture, should be interested in things “indigenous” and all the discourse contained within this conceptualization. In fact, I found that bilingual peasants, when they read, read newspapers to learn about current events, and, when they listened to music, they were more likely to listen to coastal *cumbia* with electric instruments or even American rock and rap. The truth is that “indigenous” discourse and an obsession with folk traditions belong solely to the middle class who organizes revitalization programs. By attaching Quechua to a mythical past, revitalization activists are fossilizing the language and stunting its potential in a modern world.

While I have so far discussed the effects of this process on perceptions of the language, it also affects the structure of the language itself. An analysis of the linguistic characteristics of the specific variety of Quechua spoken by the revitalization activists is pertinent to this study to obtain an understanding of how this variety of Quechua differs from and alienates the peasant class. This applies mainly to the south, where there has been debate over which variety of Quechua should serve as the standard variety in the interregional media. In particular, the Quechua spoken by the middle class has undergone changes due to its proximity to Spanish. While Quechua revitalization activists hold that this is the “purist” form of Quechua, it differs enough from the Quechua spoken by the majority of peasants to make it difficult to use and to understand. Thus, by adamantly endorsing their own sociolect spoken by only a handful of speakers as the standard

variety, Quechua revitalization activists are damaging the already fragile vitality of the language spoken by the majority.

Put simply, the Quechua-speaking middle class, in its obsession to preserve the true “Inca” elements of the language (elements that reflect the cultural construction described earlier), has fossilized some archaic (“traditional”) features of the language (some that never even existed before the Conquest) and hindered natural language evolution that would allow Quechua to serve as a modern language in daily communication. Furthermore, the middle class, since its members are universally bilingual or monolingual Spanish-speakers, unconsciously introduces elements from Spanish into Quechua or treats the targeted standard dialect as a Romance language, which produces a synthetic standard that would seem awkward to monolingual Quechua speakers. The effects on the proposed standard for Quechua are manifest in at least orthographic, lexical, and syntactic forms. While many revitalization activists pronounce Quechua with difficulty, they acknowledge that only native speakers pronounce Quechua correctly, and the phonology of the proposed standard variety is, therefore, mostly unaffected by its proximity to Spanish in this social group.

As described previously, the controversy over the orthographic standard of Quechua is notorious and violent. Here, I will discuss only the most outstanding orthographic controversy, namely, the use of three versus five vowels. I have found that the many revitalization activists who reject the three vowel orthographic convention simply do not understand arguments by linguists concerning the phonemes of the language. This confusion is compounded by the fact that many of the Quechua-speaking middle class speak Spanish as their primary language, which undoubtedly possesses five

phonemic vowels. Revitalization activists are Spanish speakers, and they simply analyze Quechua using the Spanish phonological system. The debate is over whether Quechua should make use of the letters “e” and “o” in writing. The fact is that only three vowels are phonemic in all varieties of Southern Quechua: /a/, /i/, and /u/. However, a Spanish speaker will hear two other vowel sounds in certain environments, which are due to allophonic variation; namely, /i/ and /u/ become more open in proximity to the uvular consonants so that a Spanish speaker hears [e] and [o], respectively. Since Spanish orthography has historically been used to write Quechua since colonial times, these allophones of /i/ and /u/ were written with the Latin letters “e” and “o”. Although this system seems simple to a Spanish speaker, a monolingual Quechua speaker cannot differentiate between /i/ and [e] and /u/ and [o], and many texts, such as the Huarochiri manuscript, contain errors or use “i” and “e” and “u” and “o” interchangeably in any environment. In fact, vocalic allophonic variation in Quechua is so complex as to include more than the five vowels that Spanish happens to possess—as an English speaker, I heard at least nine, and a French speaker would hear yet more. Be that as it may, the Quechua-speaking middle class, since it utilizes Spanish as its dominant language, adamantly maintains that Quechua has a system of five vowels, and organizations like the Academia Mayor have blocked efforts by linguists to implement a three-vowel orthographic norm that would allow monolingual Quechua-speakers to learn to write their language with greater ease. Using this orthographic system, monolingual Quechua-speaking peasants are at a disadvantage.

The lexical issue has more to do with the conscious “identity” that the Quechua-speaking middle class is attempting to uphold, which is formed in opposition to the

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Spanish-speaking coast; therefore, Spanish neologisms are considered “incorrect” in the standard language. In order to make the language more purely “indigenous”, one simply uses more purely “indigenous” words. Many Quechua speaking peasants are bilingual to various extents and utilize words and phrases from both Spanish and Quechua—in a bicultural world, such skills are essential. For example, the Spanish *gustar* appears in Quechua as *gustay* and carries the same significance (broadly, “to like”). Such borrowings take place between all languages; indeed, one informant confessed that most Spanish-speakers refer to a computer mouse as a “mouse”, using the English word. She continued, “It wouldn’t make any sense to say ‘*ratón*’; it’s simply known as a ‘mouse’.” Such examples are seemingly infinite in any language. Similarly, a Quechua-speaker refers to technology introduced through the Spanish-speaking world using Spanish names with varying degrees of phonological assimilation. For instance, since computers were introduced to the Andes through the Spanish-speaking world, Quechua-speakers call them “*computadorkuna*” (the Spanish word with the Quechua plural suffix), which may be pronounced exactly as in Spanish or with /o/ and /e/ assimilated to [u] and [i], respectively. Although such borrowings are natural and expected, the Peruvian Quechua-speaking middle class vehemently spurns their use and calls for the use of originally Quechua words. Rejecting foreign borrowings is reminiscent of other programs, such as that of Tamil rejecting Sanskrit roots for what were considered purely “Tamil”, which are possible and may fulfill a sense of nationalism and purism. However, in the case of Quechua, the targeted language is in real danger of absolute extinction. The act of further displacing the spoken language from what may be the standard does nothing to revitalize the language. Words that the Quechua-speaking middle class endorses to replace

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loanwords are often unwieldy or nonsensical, and Quechua-speakers who are not present during the coinage of these words will doubtfully understand their meaning. For example, many Quechua-speakers know and use the Spanish word “*filosofía*” to refer to the Western concept of “philosophy”. However, Dina stated that such usage was incorrect in Quechua that the concept should be translated literally into the language as “*yachaykhuyay*”. However, when I used this word with peasants, they did not understand me. In order to revitalize the language, activists should make using the language more accessible, not more difficult by introducing new idiosyncrasies.

The Quechua spoken by the Peruvian middle class that is being prepped to be the standard dialect has also undergone syntactical change due to its proximity to Spanish. I use “syntax” here to refer to the use of conjunctions in addition to word order, both of which have been affected. First of all, Quechua utilizes, in a neutral sentence, SOV word order, which stands for “Subject Object Verb”. Therefore, “I see the dog” would be rendered in Ayacucho Quechua as “*Ñuqa* (I) *allqu-ta-m* ([the] dog)-(accusative marker)-(firsthand knowledge) *qawa-ni* (see)(first person singular conjugational ending). While this is the most common word order, SVO sentences are possible and give emphasis to the act being realized. On the other hand, Spanish, like English, most often uses SVO word order, such as in, “*Yo* (I) *mir-o* (see)(first person singular conjugational ending) *a-l* (accusative marker for personified objects)(masculine definite article) *perro* (dog). Since Spanish is the primary language of the Peruvian Quechua-speaking middle class, many of my informants used SVO word order predominantly while they spoke Quechua (even among fluent speakers), which I attribute to their imitation of Spanish syntax. This is also a feature of the sociolect spoken by the Cuzqueño middle class, which is endorsed by La

Academia Mayor de la Lengua Quechua; Its members and speakers who imitate that sociolect, such as those I encountered in Lima, tended to construct sentences using SVO order. A problem with the exclusive use of this word order is that it is no longer used as an emphasis, and the language loses a distinct identifying feature, for many sentiments signifying intensity are conveyed by such alterations in word order (Soto Ruiz 1976, Cusihuaman 1976). Such idiosyncrasies also once again alienate the language a degree further from that of the peasants who stand to benefit from standardization.

Second, Quechua uses numerous discursive suffixes to express what many European languages, including Spanish, express using particles such as conjunctions. For example, the suffixes *-pas* and *-taq* in Quechua may both be used to express “and”. While *-pas* marks similarity between two objects, *-taq* marks contrast; for example, “*Churiypas churiykipas unqusqam kachkanku*” means “My son and your son are both sick”, while “*Churiytaq unqusqa, churiykitaq allinlla kachkanku*” means “My son is sick, and your son is well” or “While my son is sick, your son is well”. These suffixes used in different situations may reflect sentiments reflected in English using words such as “and”, “too”, “also”, “in opposition”, “similarly”, etc. Such discursive elements are an identifying feature of the language, and native speakers use them in almost every sentence. Of course, the sentiments conveyed by such elements are subtle and rarely correspond exactly with the discursive words of European languages, and the Quechua discursive elements are, therefore, notoriously difficult to master by native European language speakers.

As a European language, Spanish uses separate words to express these sentiments, and the Peruvian Quechua-speaking middle class, because it predominately thinks in

Spanish, has changed previously existing Quechua words to serve for literal translations from Spanish using words in place of suffixes in ways that would sound odd or unnatural to a monolingual Quechua-speaker. For example, Quechua may use the word “*ima*” to express what Spanish expresses through “*y*” (“and”). Although this word literally translates as “and”, it is most commonly used for emphasis; it sounds more natural to use either the suffix “*-pas*” or to place the two words being joined side by side without any connection. However, many members of the Peruvian Quechua-speaking middle class use “*ima*” exclusively to express “and”. Such examples are numerous, and their complete enumeration is beyond the scope of this paper. It is, however, important to note that in all such examples the prospective standard dialect endorsed by the middle class Quechua speaking revitalization activists further alienates the fragile language from its greatest number of speakers.

Conclusions

In conclusion, a key reason why standardization to this point has failed, and the reason Quechua revitalization in general has failed, is because the social group, the Peruvian Quechua-speaking middle class, who represents Quechua speakers before the government and other bodies who have the power to take action to save the language is not interested in making Quechua a national or international language; the Quechua-speaking middle class views Quechua as a cultural symbol and fossilizes certain aspects of the language until it no longer functions as a system of communication. This “fossilization” is manifest in this social group’s refusal to allow Quechua to adopt new vocabulary and orthographic conventions to function in an increasingly globalized world.

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At the same time, revitalization activists choose other, more radical elements of those obscure sociolects that are imagined to be the most “Inca” and impose those features on the perspective standard variety, which makes the language even less functional as a modern, official language to be used by the peasant majority. Since the language, given these constraints, cannot be used on par with Spanish, peasants will continue to view their language with shame as “backward” and avoid teaching it to their children, which will eventually lead to the extinction of the Quechuan languages.

True Quechua revitalization will only be possible through the consideration of the real needs of the majority of Peruvian Quechua-speakers: the impoverished peasant class. Only then would the language and its usage be allowed to evolve into a form that benefited the greatest number of speakers possible. As things are, this enormous social group is mostly interested in increasing its standard of living, and since the only route to social and economic advancement is through the adoption of “Western” customs and the Spanish language, peasants readily reject Quechua in favor of the former. Indeed, an issue more important than that of standardization of Quechua is that Quechua-speaking peasants are ashamed of their language and teach their children only Spanish so that they will not be regarded as “backward”. One notable linguist at La Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, Rodolfo Cerrón-Palomino, told me,

Fifty years ago, you would hear everyone in my village speaking Quechua all the time. Now, I go back, and no one speaks Quechua. They aren’t teaching Quechua to their children, and the language is disappearing with the next generation... I think that in fifty more years, even the most celebrated dialects will be dead languages that we will study from books like Greek and Latin.

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Such a massive language extinction is indeed possible if the speakers themselves regard their language as a mark of shame. From this perspective, one may presume that an objective in Quechua revitalization more important than standardization is the social empowerment of its speakers and the formation of media in which Quechua stands as an equal to Spanish. As things stand, very few such media exist, such as in songs, traditional stories, and jokes—such media do not guarantee the survival of the language, but rather the preservation of the social identity (the “indigenous”) that resonates with them. Also, more functional media, such as newspapers and radio and television time, require a standard language variety that can be used functionally in daily communication; the currently endorsed standard variety, the middle class Cuzqueño sociolect, does not reflect the daily speech of the majority who would benefit from such a standard variety, and it is, therefore, an inconvenient and even deleterious candidate, for frustrated peasants are even more likely to give up on Quechua in favor of a better established Spanish.

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